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Kirkpatrick's Critics

Who We Are

New York

THE campuses were unfriendly to Professor Jeane Kirkpatrick this semester. She was rudely heckled in Berkeley and disinvented by Smith College. Faculty and students at Smith and Barnard made such a fuss about awards being made to her that she turned them down.

This has upset some gentler folk who thought her civil rights were being infringed. They worry too much. Mrs. Kirkpatrick is tough.

As you may recall, she first drew the attention of President-elect

By John L. Hess

Reagan with an article that made a distinction between totalitarian dictators (bad guys) and authoritarian dictators (our guys).

She became the James Watt of our diplomacy. Just as Mr. Watt divides his countrymen between "Americans and liberals," so Mrs. Kirkpatrick publicly welcomed the suggestion that now we had "an ambassador who would be on our side."

The implication, of course, was that her Democratic predecessors had been on the other side.

The lady plays hard ball. Early on, she remarked about the four American women missionaries just murdered in El Salvador: "The nuns were not just nuns, they were political activists and we should be very clear about that."

The new ambassador's first flap came when it was revealed that she had met with South African intelligence chiefs who were in Washington on phony visas. Her first U.N. speech was in defense of South

Africa's credentials. But her specialty was Latin America, where she sought understanding for what she called heroic, if brutal, dictators and "traditionalist death squads."

This bias led to trouble when Mrs. Kirkpatrick attended dinner at the Argentine Embassy at the time the Argentine military was moving to seize the Falklands.

That miffed the British, who complained about American "ideologues" who were "less than full-blooded in their support for the United Kingdom." It also annoyed Secretary of State Alexander Haig, who thought he was in charge of foreign policy.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick had earlier annoyed the whole Western alliance in a speech in which she affirmed that diplomatically the United States was "really quite isolated." She said she thought "we have many good friends and no reliable allies."

She also angered the State Department by calling it a bunch of inept amateurs. Her clawing match with Mr. Haig reached a climax when she somehow got her signals crossed on a key vote on the Falklands.

Foreign diplomats at the United Nations and abroad then predicted that Mrs. Kirkpatrick would have to go. It was wishful thinking. Mr. Haig went.

According to some Washington reports, the present crisis over Central America was whipped up by a visit Mrs. Kirkpatrick made there at President Reagan's request, after U.S. intelligence services had described the situation as stable. She reported that it was desperate enough to call for an escalation of our not-so-secret war.

She has every right to defend her views and she has ample opportunity to do so. Her critics also have a right to express their views, but they do not have a right to bar her from speaking. In fact, she did finish her speech at Berkeley, after a bout of heckling. It was she who chose not to repeat the experience elsewhere.

Rather typically, she called on us to reflect what her campus rebuffs "tell us about who we are and what we have become."

Well, we're Americans, that's who, and we haven't become anything else. For an audience to express its disapproval is as American as the Bill of Rights.

If a college were to honor a defender of the present government of Poland, its faculty and students would protest, and nobody would contest their right to do so. If it honors a defender of Latin American brutes, should they be silent?

To say so would be to concede Mrs. Kirkpatrick's argument, that there are good tyrants and bad ones. If we ever concede that, we will have become something less worthy of our traditions.